

Conclusion 9

The following is a summary of the recommendations expressed throughout the Southwest Downtown Plan (the Plan). The recommendations may be implemented through various means, including changes to City codes, new construction, and road improvement projects. Implementation mechanisms are outlined in Section 9.2 (pages 9-8 to 9-10). Adoption of the Southwest Downtown Plan is the first step in the implementation process, and the recommendations contained within will require subsequent action plans and ordinances. Public hearings, recommendation by the Planning and Zoning Commission, and adoption by the City Council will be required in most cases.

9.1 Summary of Southwest Downtown Plan Recommendations

Land Use & Zoning Recommendations:

Land Use:

- Adopt a mixed-use zoning district for the majority of the Southwest Downtown Plan Area incorporating the desired land uses identified by neighborhood public workshop participants.
- Include design guidelines for development in the Mixed-Use Zoning District that meet the goals of the Southwest Downtown Plan.

- Complete the Municipal Office Complex and remaining proposed public facilities.
- Rezone the Municipal Office Complex to a Public Facilities District.
- Rezone the Lake Creek Corridor to an Open Space District (OS).
- Allow the block on the corner of Round Rock Avenue and IH-35 to retain General Commercial (C-1) Zoning since it has IH-35 frontage.
- Retain historic development patterns wherever possible. Site design should relate to the existing historic fabric.
- Identify and protect sites, buildings and structures with significant cultural, aesthetic and social characteristics which are part of the City of Round Rock's heritage.
- Plan public space to encourage pedestrian use. Spaces should be linked to key activity centers and pedestrian routes where possible. Site and building design leading to and surrounding public spaces should help encourage their use.
- Encourage new development that provides for a mixture of uses, including retail, office and residential.
- Ensure that the combination and intensity of land uses is compatible with current and future development patterns, the character of the surrounding neighborhood, and existing adjacent land uses.
- Provide additional development requirements for properties abutting existing single-family residences to ensure compatibility between adjacent properties.
- Provide guidance in the development of new structures that bears in mind the Plan's land use recommendations and addresses the compatibility issues voiced at public workshops.

Mixed-Use Zoning:

- Encourage and support a diversity of businesses and services downtown.
- Permit a range of housing options, including single-family residences, townhouses, upper-story residences, and live/work units.
- Adopt development standards to encourage the redevelopment of lots that would not be allowed under current commercial standards.
- Encourage development in the Plan Area that meets the intent of the Southwest Downtown Plan and the proposed Mixed-Use Zoning District. The application of design guidelines to all development projects emphasizes quality architecture and development, and places a high value on varied and distinctive building designs, sensitive treatment of historic resources, generous landscaping to accent buildings, and high quality materials and construction.
- Develop compatibility standards to ensure existing single-family residences are protected from excessive light, noise, traffic or other disruptive nuisances.

Streets & Circulation Recommendations:

- Implement plans to improve streets by adding new curbs, gutters, sidewalks and on-street parking.
- Minimize disruption to businesses and property owners while street and sidewalk construction is in progress.
- Increase and define on-street parking.
- Fund the planting of street trees as part of the Street Improvement Plan.
- Continue to work with property owners during the implementation of the Street Improvement Plan to incorporate site-specific changes if necessary.
- Encourage vehicular access from the rear of a property in order to accommodate continuous sidewalks and additional on-street parking.

- Continue to address traffic and circulation issues that were raised at neighborhood public workshops.
- Improve continuity through consistent street design, pavement marking & signage.
- Establish a strong pedestrian connection between the Southwest Downtown Plan Area and future trails and open space.
- Examine the potential of the three street layout proposals brought forward by the neighborhood and outlined in Chapter 4 (Streets and Circulation). Complete necessary traffic studies and explore funding options to assess feasibility.
- Ensure coordination with the City of Round Rock Parks and Recreation Department for proposed street layout changes to ensure a hike and bike trail can be located under the proposed bridge connecting Main Street to the IH-35 frontage road, and to assist in the design of the public space that would result from the proposed redesign of the Round Rock Avenue-Liberty-Mays intersections.

Parking Recommendations:

- Implement an overall parking strategy for the Southwest Downtown Plan Area that accommodates changes in density over time. This includes exploring options for public surface lots, commercial parking, and ultimately, structured garage parking.
- Maximize on-street parking. For streets that have not yet been improved, continue to use available on-street parking; however, temporary parking improvements may be necessary for non-residential uses until street improvements are completed.
- Require that residential uses provide parking on-site.
- Provide adequate parking for commercial buildings by emphasizing the use of on-street parking and shared parking facilities.

- Provide an exemption from parking requirements in the proposed Mixed-Use Zoning District for non-residential land uses where square footage of the existing building is not increased.
- Implement alternative parking standards to address the unique conditions of the Plan Area.
- Adopt shared parking agreement requirements as part of the parking requirements section of the City's Zoning Ordinance.
- Explore potential locations and financing mechanisms for public surface parking lots in the Plan Area.
- Design structured garage parking so it does not diminish the pedestrian experience, either through appropriate design or by constructing parking structures underground.
- Encourage access to parking via rear driveways and alleys.
- Ensure that alleys remain clear and passable at all times.

Utilities & Drainage Recommendations:

- Upgrade utilities and locate them underground where possible. For placement of utilities, utilize alleys where possible.
- Design utilities to simplify and accommodate future development in the Plan Area.
- Provide regional stormwater and water quality facilities to serve the entire Plan Area.

Civic Design Recommendations:

- Meet the five design guideline objectives outlined by Carter Design Associates:
 1. Maintain a sense of connection with the historic street grid and single-family house traditions, while accommodating new construction.

2. Enhance connectivity between destinations.
 3. Minimize the impacts of increased automobile traffic.
 4. Enhance pedestrian activity.
 5. Continue the tradition of landscaped right-of-way and specimen tree planting at the street edge and in front yards.
- Identify and preserve healthy “heritage trees”.
 - Ensure that large trees in the street’s right-of-way are accommodated and incorporated into the streetscape design.
 - Earmark Tree Protection and Preservation Ordinance funds collected in the Plan Area for the purpose of planting, maintaining and replacing trees within the Southwest Downtown Plan Area.
 - Establish a hike and bike trail along Lake Creek, as identified in the City’s Trails Master Plan.
 - Construct a civic plaza at the center of the Municipal Office Complex, as identified in plans for the Complex.
 - Acquire funding to create Baylor Memorial Park south of the railroad tracks and then establish connections between the park, Lake Creek Trail and the Plan Area so that there is easy and safe access to the Park.
 - Coordinate with the City of Round Rock Parks and Recreation Department on public improvements that may affect the location of proposed hike and bike trails.
 - Create a safe and attractive pedestrian environment in the Plan Area.
 - Use landscaping or other structural elements to define open space and gathering spaces, and to distinguish private property from the public streetscape.
 - Adopt revisions to the Landscaping Development Standards in the Zoning Ordinance which allow planting of street trees to replace street yard landscaping requirements for commercial uses.

- Ensure that future street tree plantings contribute to a uniform streetscape appearance and are planted according to the Street Improvement Plan.
- Provide street lighting and recommend pedestrian-scaled lighting throughout the Plan Area.
- Provide wayfinding signs, including street signs, directional signs, vehicular directions, pedestrian directions, business wayfinding and district information signs throughout the Plan Area.
- Apply the Signs for Historic Districts and Historic Landmarks Ordinance to the Southwest Downtown Plan Area.
- Encourage that the future replatting of lots reinforces the original downtown platting of narrow lots facing the East-West avenues, with building fronts coming up to the street and the rear of the building abutting the alley, middle of the block, or internal parking areas.

Design Recommendations:

- Incorporate design standards to minimize land use conflicts that may occur between neighboring properties.
- Ensure that landscaping, signage, and light fixture design reflect the recommendations provided in the Plan.
- Encourage the development of a pedestrian-friendly neighborhood, with emphasis on the orientation of buildings, walkways and landscape amenities to enhance the safety and convenience of pedestrian movement.
- Ensure that outdoor pedestrian use areas include amenities such as trellises, shade trees, raised planters, and landscaped berms to create inviting outdoor areas.
- Adopt a mixed-use zoning district that reflects the proposed design standards presented in the Southwest Downtown Plan.

9.2 Implementation

The adoption of the Southwest Downtown Plan plays an integral part in the future development of the Southwest Downtown Plan Area (Plan Area). Implementation of the Plan is proposed through the following ordinances and policies:

- Adoption of a mixed-use zoning district
- Implementation of the Street Improvement Plan and associated recommendations
- Implementation of parking plan policies proposed in Chapter 5 (Parking) and the examination of a future parking district
- Development of criteria for additional protections of “heritage trees” in the Southwest Downtown Plan Area
- Adoption of a revised historic sign ordinance to include the Southwest Downtown Plan Area

In order to better implement the recommendations of the Southwest Downtown Plan, a mixed-use zoning district is proposed for the Plan Area. A summary of the proposed MU-1 Zoning District (MU-1) can be found in Appendix D. This new Zoning District will allow a mixture of uses to be permitted and co-exist, without compromising the quality of life of residents in single-family dwellings. The MU-1 District proposes design standards that will complement and enhance the Plan Area and meet the goals of the Southwest Downtown Plan.

The Plan is intended to be used as a guiding tool to encourage new development while accommodating existing single-family residences. The Plan provides background on why a mixed-use zoning district would work well in the Southwest Downtown Plan Area. Design recommendations assist in defining the look of a pedestrian-friendly, mixed-use neighborhood.

At the time of Southwest Downtown Plan adoption, a consulting team from PageSoutherlandPage is continuing to work on the development of the Municipal Office Complex and the associated plan for street improvements and utility upgrades. Minor modifications may be

required to the layout as construction begins due to constraints imposed by existing tree roots and other impediments.

Infrastructure improvements should begin in 2005, and are expected to occur in phases. A construction phasing schedule is currently being developed to reflect the construction timeline and availability of funding. Due to the phased nature of infrastructure improvements, some new uses may be established in advance of nearby on-street parking improvements. In the interim, paving and striping may be required on the streets adjacent to new non-residential uses. These temporary improvements should be in accordance with the proposed Street Improvement Plan. Another objective of the construction phasing is to minimize disruption to businesses and property owners while public improvements are in progress.

As mentioned earlier, funding for street trees and parking will be considered as part of the Southwest Downtown Plan implementation process. As the Plan Area develops, it may be necessary to establish a parking district which would allow property owners that cannot develop their required parking on-site to pay into a district-wide parking fund to finance public parking facilities. The City is looking to strategically place public surface parking lots in the Plan Area. These lots may eventually need to be developed as structured parking garages at a future date. If shared parking is to be encouraged, the information required to be included in a shared parking agreement will need to be adopted formally as part of the parking requirements in the City's Zoning Ordinance.

Existing trees on private lots will need to be inspected more closely to determine their size and condition as new development progresses. Funds that are set aside for tree planting and replacement should be used in the Plan Area.

As mentioned in Chapter 8 (Design Recommendations), the Signs for Historic Districts and Historic Landmarks Ordinance should be revised and then amended to include the Southwest Downtown Plan Area. The types of signs that would be permitted in the Plan Area would be similar to many of those found there now. However, the design

of signs according to a revised historic sign ordinance would ensure that the signs are complementary to the scale and character of the Plan Area.

It is clear that on-going review of the Southwest Downtown Plan Area to assess the effects of Plan implementation will be required. The proposed Mixed-Use Zoning Ordinance is the first of its kind for the City of Round Rock, so City Staff will continue to review design and development standards to ensure that they continue to support the Plan Area's development pattern.